

Town of Arlington Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)

Tuesday, April 29, 2003 7:15 PM

Committee members present: Elisabeth Carr-Jones, Larry Englisher, Lt. Jim McHugh, Michael Rademacher, Scott Smith, David Walkinshaw

Minutes from 3/25/03

The minutes of 3/25 were approved unanimously.

Administration

Scott Smith, serving as Chairman in Ed Starr's absence, announced that discussion of three items on the agenda for the meeting would be postponed. Ralph Elwell sends his regrets and plans to address the Zip Car Update, Update on Bylaws and Pace Car Planning items at the next TAC meeting.

Spring/Jason Status

David Walkinshaw reported that the TAC proposal for an asphalt berm traffic island developed by the Public Works Engineering Department for the Spring/Jason intersection was in the queue for BOS approval and implementation.

Crosswalk Working Group

Larry Englisher reported that the Crosswalk Working Group had met the previous week and that the Group expects to conduct one more formal meeting before completing and presenting its recommendations at the June TAC meeting. Larry summarized the Working Group's activities to-date and presented an Outline of Guidelines Summary Document for the Committee's review.

Town Meeting Preparation

Scott Smith reported that although we will be deferring our request for funding, the TAC will still be making a 10-minute presentation to Town Meeting for Article 67. Along with the presentation, the TAC will also be delivering an official written report to the Town Meeting Moderator.

The Committee reviewed the proposed powerpoint presentation. Larry Englisher suggested including a map showing the areas that the TAC has been involved with, that the bullet item "Develop consistent and effective approaches to transportation problems" be added to the presentation, and the bulleted items under Engineering on the second proposed slide be removed. Jim McHugh suggested that Pleasant Street be removed from the second proposed slide because it was inappropriately specific. Elisabeth Carr-Jones suggested including an inventory of TAC traffic data collected by the Arlington Police's Traffic and Parking Unit. David Walkinshaw suggested that collected speed data also be included in the presentation and that the diagram on the last proposed slide should show Police and Public Works as well as a weaker visual connection between the TAC and the Community Group. The diagram became the subject of discussion, with Committee members agreeing to make further recommendations to Scott on improvements.

Pleasant Street

Jim McHugh reported that the DPW had installed the 25 MPH and curve chevron signs in the approved locations on Pleasant Street and that a pedestrian warning sign had been placed on the crosswalk at Kensington Park . Permanent crosswalk signs at this intersection, with fluorescent yellow green backgrounds, were expected to be installed soon.

David Walkinshaw reported that, with the help of the neighbors, the Pleasant Street signage inventory had been completed. It was found that some vestigial signs could be removed and that other signs were in need of replacement due to age.

Hutchinson Road

Larry Englisher reported that he had agreed to head the Hutchinson Road Working Group and that Ed Starr had forwarded him the related Board of Selectmen's package. The neighborhood group requesting action on Hutchinson Road represents both Arlington and Winchester residents. They have conducted a neighborhood survey, which indicates that their main concern is traffic speed. Jim McHugh pointed out that the data indicates that traffic volume may be a more significant problem, much of which is cut-through traffic at weekday peak hours. David Walkinshaw noted that the survey, as written, could be considered biased.

Larry indicated that Hutchinson Road's curves and hills produce visibility problems and that posted speed limit signs are inconsistent, with 25 MPH being posted in Arlington and 30 MPH in Winchester. Elisabeth Carr-Jones noted that Alan McClennen had reported a previous reluctance on the part of the neighborhood residents to install sidewalks and other improvements, indicating a preference for retaining the roadway's scenic character.

The Hutchinson Road neighborhood group has also contacted Winchester's Transportation Advisory Committee, which has agreed to conduct traffic counts in the area. David Walkinshaw suggested that Larry should first contact the Winchester TAC and coordinate to share traffic data and findings, and then schedule a morning meeting of all interested parties at the Community Safety Building. Jim McHugh agreed to investigate the 25 MPH speed limit to determine if it is currently enforceable.

Streetlight Recommendations

Elisabeth Carr-Jones presented materials on the town-wide Streetlight Survey, managed by the Town's Building Inspector Michael Byrne. Four options are under consideration: Option A replaces all fixtures with 50W high pressure sodium, Option B replaces all fixtures with 70W high pressure sodium, Option C replaces fixtures at intersections with 70W high pressure sodium and the remaining fixtures with 50W high pressure sodium, and Option D maintains the existing mercury vapor fixtures. Sample streetlights have been installed on three Arlington roadways.

Scott Smith reported that the Crosswalk Working Group had discussed the options at their meeting the previous week and had favored Options A and C. Questions about installing 70W fixtures at all intersections (Option C) resulted in Michael Rademacher suggesting that 70W fixtures be installed at crosswalks, instead of intersections. Elisabeth Carr-Jones agreed to contact Michael Byrne, thank him for conducting the survey, tell him that the Committee supported Options A and C, and suggest that the crosswalk modification to Option C might represent a desirable compromise between the proposed Options A and C.

Thermoplastic Crosswalks and Advanced Yield

Scott Smith reported that the thermoplastic pavement markings approved by the Committee had been installed at all seven of the Massachusetts Avenue crosswalk locations. The material is highly visible, but appears to be less than the 10-foot width specified by the Committee. Unfortunately, the new crosswalks also emphasize the need to repaint the other crosswalks, especially those on Massachusetts Avenue, which look comparatively worn. Scott agreed to contact DPW, thank them for their quick installation, find out if we paid for 10-foot wide applications, and request that the remaining crosswalks be painted as soon as possible. Scott also agreed to notify Selectman Diane Mahon of the thermoplastic installations.

It was recognized that the new crosswalks also offer an opportunity for community education. Publicity in Arlington's print, cable and web media could explain the new pavement markings and introduce the advance yield markings planned for the Town Hall crosswalk. Elisabeth Carr-Jones agreed to begin drafting an article and to contact Selectman Jack Hurd regarding Arlington cable broadcasting opportunities.

Town Transportation News

David Walkinshaw reported that, at the last Municipal Parking Subcommittee meeting, it was suggested that the TAC should take on the subcommittee's work. David reported that he had discouraged this suggestion.

Scott Smith reported that the Rt. 16/ Massachusetts Avenue intersection signal timing had not yet been changed because Cambridge was waiting for new traffic signals to be installed. Once the signal timing is changed, the Committee can move ahead with other modifications at the intersection.

Scott Smith reported that both Ed Starr and himself had been in contact with John Sanchez, Arlington's new Director of Public Works. The Committee looks forward to a productive working relationship with Mr. Sanchez.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 PM.

Handouts:

Agenda packet including Meeting Agenda of 4/29/03, Meeting Minutes of 3/25/03 and Proposed Powerpoint Presentation to Town Meeting - from Scott Smith

Outline of Guidelines Summary Document of the TAC Crosswalk Working Group - from Larry Englisher

Town of Arlington Streetlight Survey Informational materials - from Elisabeth Carr-Jones